



## Tree Time

Tree Time was part of Perspectives on Practice 2021: People Dancing's online programme of artist-led events and learning opportunities, discussion and debate, networks and spaces to gather, (re)connect and share.

It was an invitation to dancers to experience their relationship with trees in a new way, guided by a written score provided by Helen Poynor.

The score emerged out of Helen's own work with movement in natural environments and dancers were invited to engage with the score outside, on their own, either at the same time as other dancers or at a time of their own choosing.

This was a non-digital activity with the aim of encouraging dancers to get in touch with nature, to explore new ways of moving, thinking and feeling, to dance at the same time as others in different geographical locations and settings, and to share their experiences (if they chose to do so) in any medium they preferred.



# Settling

Through a changing landscape and battleground of shattered branches and disturbed earth, movement and visual artist **Catherine Hawkins** is carried by inspiration, support and a feeling of lightness as she returns to nature and her practice in a time of disconnection





I'm writing by a lake on Pennington Flash Country Park, Greater Manchester, a place I love near home. The low winter sun is warm, its white light dancing wildly across the silver-blue water towards me.

On Sunday 27 June 2021, I walked here with Helen Poynor's Tree Time, delighted to see it offered as part of People Dancing's Perspectives on Practice programme. I was excited that others I've met while taking part in Walk of Life training developed by Helen Poynor may also be moving and dancing on this day.

It was late afternoon in this place that has grown busy during the pandemic. Inspired and supported by Helen's work, I've regularly explored movement and visual art here since 2009. I spent years developing projects and creative walks to encourage others to be here more and now I fondly remember a time when I could, in wet weather, work in solitude. I value this time more now as I became a full-time carer during the pandemic and am here a lot less and miss my practice.

**'Allowing your experience to simply be what it is' (1)**

I walked, quickly pausing, intrigued by the invitation to settle. I covered ground, visiting familiar trees, awkwardly slowing down in a changed landscape. I lost a parent a year ago and remembered his amusement here, at watching the birds while eating ice cream.

**'Receive the tree standing' (1)**

Pauses grew longer and I started to feel a quiet movement dialogue beginning in an area of trees.

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Photo: Catherine Hawkins.

I stayed with a huge old tree I know well. It seems to hold all my creative moments in its branches and I just have to let them fall into my hands. I felt revitalised and later, calmer.

### **'Returning to the earth' (1)**

In July 2021, I took Tree Time on a visit to my brother in the rural Midlands. It was hot and after an uneasy descent, I spent hours lying in grasses and walking barefoot (I forgot about the tick advice until in the shower!).

I began to feel lighter, like I had shed a tightness and my widening feet carried me easier on the cooler evenings, down overgrown canal banks, fuzzy with meadowsweet. I met beautiful trees and was drawn to the large stump of a recently fallen tree. I traced its splintered wounds, seeing, touching and moving. While 'moving closer to the tree' through a battleground of shattered branches and disturbed earth, a local walked by and said, "It's wonderful, isn't it!"

### **'Let go of any preconceptions about what your movements should look or feel like' (1)**

I felt at home spending time with the 'broken oak' as I named it and gradually a desire for constant

motion slowed down to rest and I settled. I wrote words, took photographs and painted.

### **'If you feel inclined' (1)**

Initially, I was unsure about sharing my words, photographs and paintings and then I remembered how this non-judgemental sharing and acknowledgement of whatever had arisen was so satisfying when training with Helen. It was, again, a delight to send and see these shared further.

I hope those of you out there who also took the Tree Time movement score into the natural world, in this time of dis-connection, change and difficult stuff, also felt how wondrous and powerful it is that carefully crafted words on a page return us to the safety of trees.

Thank you, Helen Poynor and People Dancing.

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### **Info**

[cathhawkins@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cathhawkins@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.catherine-hawkins.co.uk](http://www.catherine-hawkins.co.uk)  
[f /catherinehawkinsartist](https://www.facebook.com/catherinehawkinsartist)

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### **References**

1. Taken from Helen Poynor's Tree Time score.